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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 30 of its resolution 1546 (2004), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the ninth submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the previous report (S/2006/360 of 2 June 2006). It presents a summary of key political developments in the period under review, particularly concerning the efforts of the Government of Iraq to promote national reconciliation and to improve the security situation throughout the country, as well as regional and international developments pertaining to Iraq. The report also provides an update on the activities of my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the activities of UNAMI, an assessment of the security situation and an update on operational and security matters.

3. On 11 August 2006, the Security Council adopted resolution 1700 (2006), by which the Council extended the mandate of UNAMI for an additional period of 12 months, as requested by the Government of Iraq on 3 August 2006. In the resolution, the Council recognized that there continues to be a vital role for UNAMI in assisting Iraqi efforts to build a productive and prosperous nation at peace with itself and its neighbours. The Council also expressed its intention to review the mandate of UNAMI in 12 months or sooner, if requested by the Government of Iraq.

II. Summary of key developments in Iraq

A. Political developments

4. During the period under review, Iraq was faced with growing violence and insecurity, particularly in Baghdad and the southern and western regions. In response to those challenges, the first constitutionally elected Government of Iraq following its appointment on 20 May 2006, focused its political efforts on promoting national reconciliation and dialogue.

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5. On 8 June 2006, the Council of Representatives completed the Government formation process by approving the appointment of Mohammed Abdulqadir al-Obaidi as Minister for Defence, Jawad Bolani from the Al-Fadila party of the United Iraqi Alliance as Minister of the Interior, and Sherwan al-Waili from Al-Daawa of the United Iraqi Alliance as Minister of State for National Security.

6. On 14 June 2006, the Government launched a security plan for Baghdad aimed at addressing the increased level of violence and growing criminality, which are undermining its efforts of reconciliation and dialogue. The second phase of the Baghdad security plan was initiated at the beginning of August 2006 with the redeployment of additional troops of the Multinational Force to the capital.

7. On 25 June 2006, the Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, unveiled the National Reconciliation Plan. The 24-point Plan called for a qualified amnesty, the release of detainees, the reform of the legal and judicial systems, the provision of assistance to areas that are prone to violence, the facilitation of dialogue on constitutional and related matters, and the resolution of the problem of militias. The Plan also acknowledged the idea of an Iraqi-led Baghdad peace initiative, emphasized the need for regional support to achieve peace and stability in Iraq, and recognized the efforts of the League of Arab States to convene a conference on Iraqi national accord. The Plan also provided for the establishment of the High Committee for National Reconciliation, which held its first session on 22 July 2006. The composition of the Committee has not yet been finalized owing to a difference in views concerning membership criteria.

8. In his statement to mark the launch of the National Reconciliation Plan, my Special Representative welcomed the Plan and commended the efforts of the Government of Iraq in promoting dialogue and peace. He called upon all concerned, including regional and international actors, to support the initiative. He also reiterated that the United Nations remained fully committed to facilitate and assist in the implementation of the issues outlined in the reconciliation project of the Prime Minister, in accordance with its mandate.

9. Prior to the August recess of Parliament, the Council of Representatives established 19 of its 24 parliamentary committees. Extensive debate on the internal rules of procedure and the powers of the Speaker of the Council delayed parliamentary deliberations and the work of the committees. The kidnapping on 1 July 2006 of Tayseer Mashhadani, member of parliament from the Tawafoq coalition, resulted in further delay when the Tawafoq bloc temporarily suspended its participation in the Council of Representatives. Tawafoq resumed its participation after receiving assurances of Ms. Mashhadani's release, which occurred on 26 August 2006.

10. On 16 and 25 July, the Council of Representatives conducted its first and second readings of the draft law on the establishment of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The Council decided that it would resume its discussions on that subject in September. It also decided to extend the caretaker mandate of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq for an additional two months, until 10 October 2006. In addition, the Council continued its consultations on the draft law for the establishment of a national human rights commission in Iraq.

B. Regional developments

11. At the invitation of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Foreign Ministers of the countries neighbouring Iraq held their ninth meeting in Tehran on 8 and 9 July 2006. The meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers of Bahrain, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey, as well as the Secretaries-General of the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. My Special Representative for Iraq also attended the meeting. In the final communiqué of the meeting, the Ministers welcomed the establishment of a broad-based Government with the participation of all segments of the Iraqi population.

12. The League of Arab States continued preparations for the convening of the conference on Iraqi national accord. At the invitation of the League of Arab States, UNAMI sent a team to participate in the preparatory meeting for the conference, which was held in Cairo from 25 to 27 July 2006. It was decided that the next preparatory meeting would be held in November 2006. My Special Representative has remained in close contact with the Secretary-General of the League, Amre Moussa, and its Envoy to Iraq, Mukhtar Lamani, in support of this initiative.

C. International developments

13. On 16 June 2006, I accepted the request by the Government of Iraq for the United Nations to provide support in developing the International Compact with Iraq. The Compact is an initiative of the Government for a new partnership with the international community. Its purpose is to achieve a national vision for Iraq with the aim of consolidating peace and pursuing political, economic and social development over the next five years. The primary focus will be to build a framework for the economic transformation of Iraq and its integration into the regional and global economy. The Compact will also reflect the inter-connectedness of political and security developments with Iraq's recovery, which is a prerequisite for sustainable regional investments. The Compact is co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Barham Salih, and my Deputy Secretary-General, Mark Malloch Brown. My Special Representative for Iraq has been designated as my focal point for the Compact in Iraq.

14. On 5 and 6 July, my Deputy Secretary-General visited Baghdad to consult with the Government of Iraq, the United Nations Development Group, United Nations agencies, the World Bank, and the international donor community on the process of developing the Compact. The co-chairs are assisted by a preparatory group of countries and organizations to develop the Compact via a consultative process. The group provides support, advice and guidance on the Compact. The co-chairs have appointed an executive committee that will manage the process towards the adoption of the Compact and beyond. The committee includes representatives of the Government of Iraq, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Development Bank.

15. On 27 July, the co-chairs issued a joint statement formally launching the Compact, in which they invited the international community to commit their support to the process and to join as valued partners in the International Compact with Iraq.

It is envisaged that the finalized Compact, including key priorities, benchmarks and commitments, will be presented by the Government of Iraq by the end of 2006.

16. In order to engage in a strategy dialogue on the future of Iraq, on 18 September, I will convene a meeting of Foreign Ministers at Headquarters in New York. The purpose of the meeting will be to review progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and the commitment of the United Nations to provide the necessary assistance to the Government of Iraq. Participants will include Iraq and its neighbouring countries, the permanent members of the Security Council, key donors and representatives of concerned regional and international organizations. The meeting will provide an opportunity to review the progress being made by the Government in the political, security and economic fields, and to seek broader international support and engagement with the Government. The meeting will also provide a unique opportunity for the Government to present an outline of its programme for the reconstruction of Iraq over the next five years inside the framework of the International Compact.

III. Update on activities of the Mission

A. Political activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

17. During the period under review, my Special Representative remained in close contact with all key Iraqi political, community and religious leaders to promote the National Reconciliation Plan of the Government. He also encouraged all concerned to exert their influence to protect civilian lives and dedicate their efforts to ensure mutual respect and dialogue and to discuss tangible steps to reduce violence and build trust in State institutions. He also continued his consultations with political, tribal and religious leaders to discuss mechanisms for exploring the Iraqi-led Baghdad peace initiative.

18. In the context of his regular contacts with the League of Arab States on the continuing efforts to convene the conference on Iraqi national accord, my Special Representative, on 12 June 2006, met the delegation of the League led by Assistant Secretary-General Ahmad Bin Hilli to discuss preparations for the conference.

19. On 8 and 9 July, my Special Representative visited Tehran to participate in the ninth meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the countries neighbouring Iraq. At the meeting, my Special Representative stressed the need for regional support to achieve peace and stability in Iraq and that all of Iraq's neighbours have a stake in the success of the Compact. He held separate meetings with the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Manouchehr Mottaki, and the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari, to discuss matters of regional interest, including preparations for the International Compact. He also met the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa, and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu.

20. My Special Representative received the Governor of Karbala and members of the Karbala Provincial Council. He also met with senior commanders of the Multinational Force, as well as with the Ambassadors of Denmark, France, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of

America, and the representative of the European Union in Iraq. In addition, within the framework of the ongoing preparations for the International Compact, my Special Representative held consultations with members of the Government of Iraq as well as with representatives of the diplomatic and the donor community in Baghdad.

B. Constitutional support activities

21. During the period under review, the UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support continued to play a leading role in promoting dialogue and consensus-building on the Constitution of Iraq. The Office met with a broad spectrum of political and community leaders, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations to discuss issues pertaining to the review, amendment and implementation of the Constitution.

22. In July 2006, the Office completed its seminar programme, which was launched in February 2006, to promote multiparty dialogue. The programme engaged senior political leaders, technocrats and members of civil society in focused discussions on critical constitutional issues. The programme concentrated on the constitutional themes of decentralization and federalism, the rule of law and human rights, and issues relating to accountable governance. Specific topics included multilateral dialogue on the subjects of the rule of law and the judiciary system, human rights, oil and gas, federalism, fiscal federalism, and governance.

23. The Office continued to provide advice and assistance to the Government and the Council of Representatives on issues relating to the establishment of the constitutional review committee. It also continued to contribute to UNAMI reconciliation activities, in particular those targeted at the resolution of potentially divisive constitutional issues.

C. Electoral assistance activities

24. On 2 July 2006, the Council of Representatives requested the assistance of the United Nations in the drafting of the legal framework for the establishment of a permanent electoral commission along with other related issues, such as the conduct of upcoming electoral events. In response to the request of the Council of Representatives, the UNAMI Electoral Assistance Team provided technical assistance to the Legal Committee of the Council in the drafting of the law establishing the Independent High Electoral Commission, as well as on the formulation of the new electoral law.

25. On 16 and 25 July, the Council of Representatives conducted its first and second readings of the draft law on the establishment of the Commission. The Council decided that it would resume its discussions on the matter in September. In the meantime, the Council decided to extend the caretaker mandate of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq for an additional two months, until 10 October 2006.

26. In addition, the Electoral Assistance Team continued its efforts aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Independent Electoral Commission and the skills of its staff. The Team stands ready to provide required technical assistance to

support the transition of the Commission to the new Independent High Electoral Commission.

D. Reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance

27. Concern continues to grow over the displacement of civilians, primarily as a result of intercommunal violence, but also due to military operations. According to United Nations and Iraqi Government sources, the number of displaced families since the Samarra attack on 22 February 2006 exceeded 30,000 (approximately 200,000 individuals). National non-governmental organizations and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society have reported that their personnel are facing increased harassment and threats as a result of their efforts to assist internally displaced persons. As a consequence, volunteers have left the agencies, further diminishing the human resources available to assist those in need.

28. The rapidly increasing number of internally displaced persons underlines the need for additional resources to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have nearly exhausted their resources earmarked for emergency humanitarian activities, as most were funded from donations received following the last United Nations consolidated appeal for Iraq in 2003, as well as from their respective core resources. Similarly, the Government of Iraq is constrained in its ability to adequately respond to the situation. There is now an urgent need for substantial new funding to meet the needs of those who have been displaced by the conflict.

29. The Mission has also provided the Government with guidance on addressing the needs of internally displaced persons in regard to shelter and assistance, in an effort to avoid the establishment of tented camps that would pose long-term problems and potentially jeopardize the security and dignity of the displaced. Other advocacy issues include respect for humanitarian access and space, and other principles of international humanitarian law.

30. The United Nations country team continues to work according to its plans, with a new focus on area-based development as a result of its internal consultations. Numerous missions and regular dialogue have allowed UNAMI to help address the specific needs of communities in various regions. As a part of that process, UNAMI continued to support the initiative of the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation to enhance coordination and interaction between the provincial and central authorities on reconstruction and development challenges. The assignment of an international adviser to the Ministry has been completed. Discussions are under way to determine whether the need exists to continue the arrangement.

31. A revised concept for the establishment of an emergency coordination and response cell was submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister during the reporting period. The UNAMI Humanitarian Adviser assigned to the Office will be returning to Baghdad soon to work on the cell. Frequent visits to Iraq by my Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian, Reconstruction and Development Affairs have helped to raise awareness within the Government of the concept for the cell.

32. Support to civil society remains high on the United Nations agenda in Iraq. Capacity-building, grants for the provision of services to communities and the convening of regional coordination meetings for non-governmental organizations

are ongoing activities. A United Nations International Adviser recently arrived in Baghdad to work with the State Ministry for Civil Society Affairs, focusing on the drafting of the law on non-governmental organizations, and providing support for institution-building and training.

33. In my previous report, it was anticipated that there would be a meeting of the Donor Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq during the current reporting period. However, the preparations for the International Compact provide for a recalibration of the Facility mechanism to accelerate the gradual channelling of bilateral and multilateral support directly to the Government of Iraq.

F. Human rights activities

34. Iraq is experiencing an acute human rights and humanitarian crisis, with indiscriminate killings, targeted attacks, crime and corruption contributing to the lack of law and order. Despite efforts by the new Government to address the situation, State institutions have been unable to protect individuals from gross human rights violations or grant redress or compensation to the rapidly growing number of victims. I remain concerned by reports that militia elements have infiltrated governmental and law enforcement institutions, thus undermining the confidence of the Iraqi people in State institutions. The existence of death squads, some of which are linked to the existing armed militias, and even to sectors of Government security forces, is highlighted by the daily appearance, in various parts of the country, of dozens of bodies of murdered persons bearing signs of torture and execution.

35. Violence in Iraq continues to disproportionately affect civilians. According to figures provided by the Ministry of Health, 3,149 civilians were killed in June while at least 3,438 were reportedly killed in July. Numerous attacks and mass kidnappings of civilians revealed a pattern of targeting based on sectarian affiliation, with a clear intent to provoke fear and take vengeance. The impact on women, children and ethnic and religious minorities has been particularly alarming. Women continue to see their rights and freedom curtailed. A significant number of "honour crimes" have been reported, although precise figures remain difficult to obtain. Children also continue to suffer not only from indiscriminate violence, including kidnapping, but also from acts of abuse. The violence has led to an increase in the number of internally displaced children, who require basic services and psychosocial support. Ethnic and religious minorities also continue to be targeted by violence, often resulting in forced migration and internal displacement.

36. The number of detainees held in the country also remains a source of concern. The Ministry of Human Rights reported that approximately 26,398 detainees were being held in detention centres countrywide at the end of July 2006, including some 13,000 detainees in the custody of the Multinational Force. The figures include a number of detainees in the region of Kurdistan, amounting to 2,147 at the end of June. The Mission continues to work with the Iraqi authorities and the Multinational Force to ensure that the release and transfer of detainees is carried out promptly and in accordance with international human rights standards. However, thousands of detainees continue to be held in violation of the existing legal framework and still lack the right of due process, in part because of the lack of required capacity in Iraqi

courts. I welcome the release of some 3,300 individuals in June and July as an attempt to bolster the National Reconciliation Plan of the Government.

37. I remain very concerned that arbitrary detention and torture of detainees in Iraqi prisons continue to be widespread. On 1 June 2006, a joint inspection of a prison site by representatives of the Iraqi Government and the Multinational Force found 1,431 detainees with signs of physical and psychological abuse. A total of 52 arrest warrants have been issued against officials of the Ministry of the Interior, but they have yet to be served. On 1 and 2 July 2006, the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture, Manfred Nowak, met with Iraqi non-governmental organizations and representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights in Amman to survey the situation in Iraq. On 19 July, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights wrote to the Iraqi Prime Minister, commending him for his efforts to promote national reconciliation, in particular the release of detainees. She also reiterated her previous call for the immediate release of the report on the investigation into allegations of detainee abuse at the Al-Jadiriya detention centre in November 2005.

38. On 21 June 2006, following the assassination of Khamis al-Obeidi, a lawyer representing Saddam Hussein, the defence counsel boycotted several court sessions. On 27 July 2006, the court recessed until 16 October 2006, when it is scheduled to announce the verdict of the Dujail case. The current trial, which will consider the Anfal campaign in northern Iraq against Kurdish populations during the late 1980s, began on 21 August 2006. Mr. Hussein and six other co-defendants are charged with war crimes related to an internal armed conflict and crimes against humanity. Saddam Hussein and Ali-Hassan al-Majid are also charged with genocide.

39. The Mission continues to work with Iraqi ministries, judicial institutions and civil society organizations in the development of a strong human rights system. Progress was made in the drafting of a law for the establishment of a national human rights commission. The Human Rights Office also continued to support the Rule of Law Sector Working Group, a group composed of representatives of Iraqi ministries and donor countries to develop a comprehensive strategy on the rule of law.

40. On 22 and 23 July, the Human Rights Office, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Centre for Transitional Justice, in partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights, organized a meeting on transitional justice in Iraq. Numerous calls were made for greater United Nations involvement and expertise. It was agreed that further mechanisms would be established within UNAMI to support the implementation of the National Reconciliation Plan, which includes transitional justice as a key component.

IV. International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq

41. As at 31 July 2006, the total contributions to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, one of the two funds of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, equalled $934 million. A total of 101 projects valued at $831 million were approved as at the end of July 2006 for funding under the Iraq Trust Fund. Continuing the significant progress in implementation, contracts worth cumulatively $637 million (77 per cent of approved funding) have been initiated and $522 million (63 per cent of approved funding) have been disbursed.

42. On 24 May 2006, the United Nations and the World Bank hosted an informal meeting on the progress of Fund Facility activities in Amman. The meeting was attended by the officials of the Government of Iraq and 38 officials from 16 countries. The briefing focused on the third six-month progress reports from the World Bank and the United nations, as well as on the findings of external reviews of United Nations and World Bank operations. The participants recognized the many positive features of the Fund Facility, particularly the success achieved in a very difficult environment, the quality of the reports and the transparency of the information provided on the dedicated web site (www.irffi.org). The meeting strongly supported the need to retain the Fund Facility as an important instrument to support Iraq in the next stages of its reconstruction process.

43. Participants commended the United Nations on its work in Iraq, especially in the areas of electoral assistance, constitutional support and the provision of basic services. The European Commission in particular welcomed the convening of the informal meeting and the opportunity to discuss the progress reports, the reviews and the prospects for both trust funds. Subsequently, the European Commission announced that it would grant an additional €120 million to the Iraq Trust Fund to support the ongoing work on basic services and governance. The United Nations is highly appreciative of this major new contribution to the Iraq Trust Fund.

44. In follow-up to the Amman meeting, the Chair of the Fund Facility visited Baghdad from 16 to 19 July 2006 to convey the views of the Donor Committee to the new Government of Iraq. The Deputy Prime Minister and the new Minister for Planning and Development Cooperation confirmed their support for a new revitalized and refocused Facility. There was general agreement on the concept of continuing to use the Facility as a funding mechanism for rapid response to basic services and needs, but also with a greater focus on support to Iraqi institutions that would elaborate and operationalize the strategic policy and economic reforms that may result from the Compact.

V. International Advisory and Monitoring Board

45. On 17 and 18 July 2006, the International Advisory and Monitoring Board, which oversees the use of resources of the Development Fund for Iraq, met in New York and reviewed draft audit reports by Ernst & Young covering the audits of Iraqi oil export sales and Fund operations for the period from 1 July to 31 December 2005. In its statement issued on 10 August 2006, the Board noted that audit reports continued to be critical of the financial and accounting control systems in place in the spending ministries, the United States agencies in respect of the outstanding commitments using Fund resources, and the Iraqi administration of Fund resources. The Board urged the Government of Iraq to take concrete steps to address the audit findings and recommendations to ensure that oil resources were better protected.

VI. Security and operational issues

A. Assessment of the security situation

46. The level of violence in Iraq continues to rise in many areas of the country, and United Nations staff members remain at risk. The sectarian nature of most of the violence, together with resistance groups, extremist-led armed groups and organized criminal groups, combine to create a very complex and dangerous operating environment. The current level of violence and disorder is likely to continue for some time.

47. Daily civilian casualties remain high. Large-scale kidnappings are now common, as are false checkpoints and summary executions by various Shiite and Sunni armed groups. Despite the Government's introduction of the Baghdad security plan in June 2006, the levels of violence in the city have actually risen, indicating the worrisome capability of insurgents, armed opposition groups and criminal gangs. Early in August 2006, the Government of Iraq announced a second phase of the Baghdad security plan in which more than 3,700 Multinational Force troops and their armoured fighting vehicles were deployed in the city in another attempt to contain the intensifying violence.

48. However, the security situation in Iraq varies widely. Next to Baghdad, the western province of Al-Anbar is considered the most dangerous area in the country. As a result, the United Nations is unable to conduct operations there. In Baghdad, many districts have been effectively out of bounds for United Nations operations for extended periods. Large numbers of civilians, as well as personnel of Iraqi security forces and troops of the Multinational Force, are killed every week. On 12 July 2006, security responsibilities in the province of Al-Muthana in the south were handed over by the Multinational Force to Iraqi security forces. No significant acts of violence against the Government or other entities in the province have been reported.

49. The security of United Nations staff and operations in the international zone are under constant review by UNAMI and the Department for Safety and Security. Although indirect fire attacks occur, they are mostly ineffective. However, United Nations staff continue to wear personal body armour whenever moving inside the international zone and must use armoured vehicles. Although incidents are often reported from the many pedestrian and vehicular checkpoints into the international zone, and explosions and gunfire can be heard on most days, the perimeter of the international zone and its heavily controlled entrance checkpoints remain robust and safe. A roadside explosion on 7 August 2006, apparently aimed at the convoy of the Deputy Special Representative, underlined the dangers of moving inside the red zone, regardless of the fact that the incident resulted in no injuries. The incident is under investigation to determine the facts and to identify any lessons learned so that a maximum level of protection can be ensured during such movements.

50. The situation in Basra remains tense and the Multinational Force has made arrests of high-profile militia leaders in the province. In response, the levels of violence increased during the quarter, including indirect fire attacks in the Basra Palace area, which houses United Nations offices. As a result, the United Nations temporarily relocated some members of the United Nations liaison detachment staff from Basra in July. Erbil continues to be stable and calm. Nevertheless, recent

reports of potential threats kept UNAMI staff on moderate alert for numerous weeks during the reporting period. Several demonstrations over the rising prices and poor services were held in the Kurdish region, some of which led to a violent response by the police, resulting in one death and several injuries.

51. United Nations national staff members have been directly and indirectly affected by the violence, particularly in Baghdad and Basra. One national staff member of the World Health Organization has been missing since early May 2006 and several others have been threatened. The immediate relatives of several other staff members have been kidnapped, and subsequently released in return for ransom, or murdered. United Nations national staff members in Basra have been directly threatened and, in a few cases, their family members or close relatives have been killed. United Nations staff members are exposed to the effects of violence on a regular basis. Therefore, exceptional measures have been adopted, including flexible working hours, biweekly security briefings, the establishment of a national staff security working group, limited temporary accommodation in the international zone, and subsequent interaction with the Multinational Force, the Government of Iraq and other entities, when appropriate. Assisting its national staff members remains one of the Mission's foremost concerns.

52. In conclusion, the Organization's presence and its ability to operate effectively in Iraq remain severely constrained by the security environment. The United Nations is highly dependent on the Multinational Force for movement security and threat information. However, UNAMI is gradually developing methodologies and capabilities within its safety and security unit to ensure it is able to operate safely and effectively in this environment should it need to function with more self-reliance.

B. Facilities, logistics and support

53. UNAMI has commenced the planned transition from the facilities managed by the Multinational Force to the new premises managed by the Mission. On 22 August, the Mission moved its Baghdad staff from the Al-Rasheed Hotel to a temporary United Nations compound inside the international zone. The compound will serve as an interim accommodation site until a long-term and integrated facility is completed. A permanent site for that purpose has been allocated by the Government of Iraq and plans for its development, including a technical survey and site clearance, are under way. In Erbil, staff members are accommodated in the new Area Office. Improvements to the compound continue in keeping with the surrounding environment. In Basra, the new Area Office is ready for occupation by staff currently accommodated in the facilities of the Multinational Force. However, owing to recent security concerns in Basra, the planned move of staff to the United Nations compound was put on hold until further notice. Development plans are also under way for a logistics base and air terminal at Baghdad International Airport to support a dedicated aircraft when it becomes available, as well as to improve the handling of staff and cargo at the airport.

54. While the acquisition of air assets for the United Nations presence in Iraq has been a major challenge, some progress has recently been made. The Government of Japan and the United Nations have recently finalized arrangements for the provision of a dedicated weekly flight for UNAMI. The Government of Denmark has also

offered to provide a dedicated aircraft to UNAMI. I look forward to the finalization of the modalities of this offer as soon as possible. I am grateful to the Government of Japan and the Government of Denmark for their offer of air support, which will significantly improve the mobility of the Mission.

C. Agreements

55. The status-of-mission agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq was signed on 3 June 2005, but its entry into force remains pending. While the United Nations sent a note to the Government of Iraq on 6 June 2005 confirming the acceptance of the agreement, the confirmation of the Government remains pending, despite repeated reminders. I call upon the Government to take action on the approval of the agreement by way of a corresponding note.

56. The Mission continues to pursue the negotiation of a series of supplementary arrangements with the Multinational Force to implement the agreement concerning the establishment of security for UNAMI, concluded between the United Nations and the Government of the United States on 8 December 2005. I look forward to the early finalization of these arrangements, which will form a core aspect of continued security support for the presence of the United Nations in Iraq.

VII. Observations

57. Over the past three years, the people of Iraq have made many sacrifices to support the political transition of their country. Through their active participation in two elections, the constitutional process and the constitutional referendum, they have demonstrated their commitment to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq, despite the very tight transitional timetable and challenging security environment. The Iraqi people now have every right to expect their elected leaders, and first and foremost their constitutionally-elected Government, to do everything possible to deliver tangible improvements in their day-to-day lives.

58. Despite the significant achievements in the political transition process, meeting the benchmarks endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1546 (2004) has not translated into an improved security and human rights situation. This remains a major challenge. Insurgent, militia and terrorist attacks, as well as gross violations of human rights, including killings, kidnappings and torture, continued unabated in many parts of the country. Many of the victims are women, children and minorities. Iraq today has become one of the most violent conflict areas in the world. According to the latest Government figures, the number of civilians killed has increased considerably and stands at an average of 100 people per day, while more than 14,000 were reportedly wounded per month. Since the Samarra attack on 22 February 2006, approximately 200,000 individuals have been displaced. These are worrisome trends, and if they continue, the social and political fabric of the country could be endangered.

59. While I note the efforts of the Government of Iraq to take concrete measures to improve security, such as the Baghdad security plan, and the efforts by the Multinational Force to train Iraqi security forces, there can ultimately be no military

solutions to the many challenges facing Iraq. As a case in point, growing militia activities are both a cause of and a response to the rising level of insecurity and human rights violations. As long as the people of Iraq do not have full confidence in the impartiality and accountability of the new Government and its security forces, there is the danger of a vicious cycle in which rising levels of militia activities breed more fear and insecurity, which in turn will lead to a further increase in militia activities. This cycle must be broken.

60. In such a difficult environment, the burden of leadership is a heavy one. Those who are in a position to bring their influence to bear must not only take robust measures to protect the lives of innocent civilians, but also hold those responsible for violent acts accountable and bring them to justice, address legitimate grievances, and ensure that their own actions are in full accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law. The Government of Iraq has a special responsibility to ensure that all those who speak and act on its behalf do so in the interest of all Iraqi citizens, and refrain from responding to particular constituencies or interests. It must do everything possible to progressively foster an environment conducive to the demobilization, disarming and reintegration of militias.

61. A vital element in the quest for addressing the security and human rights situation is the improvement of living conditions for all Iraqis. The people of Iraq have witnessed three decades of war, internal conflict, political instability and sanctions. Most Iraqis today live without reliable access to proper health care, social services, education, employment and other economic opportunities. These needs must be addressed without delay.

62. One important economic initiative of the Government of Iraq is the International Compact, co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations, for a new partnership with the international community. Considerable preparatory work has been initiated to create an effective framework for the Compact in which the Government can develop its economic programme according to clearly defined priorities, benchmarks and commitments. While the focus of the Compact will be economic, due account needs to be taken of the interlinkages with the political and security challenges facing Iraq and the policies the Government has adopted to effectively address them. The Compact will also need to be as inclusive as possible to ensure a constructive and interactive regional and international engagement. The Government of Iraq and the international community must work together closely to develop and implement the Compact with a view to building a strong Iraqi economy, reintegrating it into the regional and global economy, and ensuring that its benefits are made available to all Iraqis. The United Nations looks forward to working with all concerned towards the successful outcome of the Compact.

63. Any strategy for the reconstruction of the country requires an enabling framework for peace and reconciliation, that addresses the causes of violence, insecurity and human rights violations. Such a framework requires political solutions based on genuine dialogue and consensus-building among the many diverse communities in Iraq, which should be seen as a source of strength rather than of division and conflict. The Government and the Council of Representatives must therefore lead in the development of a national agenda that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all Iraqi constituencies. The Iraqi people expect and deserve no less. I welcome Prime Minister Al-Maliki's National Reconciliation Plan, in which key issues requiring effective action are identified. The Iraqi-led

Baghdad peace initiative can make an important contribution to realizing the goals of the Plan, and the United Nations stands ready to assist.

64. Regional countries have an important role in supporting national reconciliation in Iraq, given the symbiotic relationship between Iraq and the region as a whole in terms of their security and prosperity. While Iraq needs to recognize the legitimate concerns of regional countries about the situation inside its own country, regional countries must be responsive to Iraqi needs. The United Nations therefore continues to support the planned League of Arab States conference on Iraqi national accord, and my Special Representative is working closely with the League on the necessary preparations. I also welcome the periodic meetings of the Foreign and Interior Ministers of the States neighbouring Iraq. These meetings have helped to promote dialogue and interaction between Iraq and its neighbours. However, much more needs to be done through such forums to promote concrete confidence-building measures, since the situation on both sides of the Iraqi border remains difficult. In the coming months, I therefore intend to explore this issue further with Member States.

65. While regional support for national reconciliation is important, the primary responsibility clearly rests with the people of Iraq. The constitutional review could become an important vehicle to establish a firm foundation for the reconciliation process. The series of multiparty seminars held by UNAMI on key outstanding constitutional issues has shown that apparently divisive issues can be resolved if approached in constructive and imaginative ways. An effective review process thus has the potential to generate buy-in from all Iraqi constituencies. It could also create important benefits for the International Compact, establishing a solid basis for the economic reconstruction of Iraq and increasing donor and investor confidence. The United Nations therefore hopes that the Council of Representatives will initiate the constitutional review as soon as possible, and remains fully committed to providing the necessary support.

66. The United Nations also stands ready to provide assistance in drafting the legal framework for the establishment of the new Independent High Electoral Commission, as requested by the Council of Representatives. I urge those concerned to respect international experience in preserving the integrity and independence of the officials both in the commission and its governorate offices. Only a genuinely independent electoral commission can ensure successful and credible elections, which are central to the maturing democracy of Iraq.

67. The United Nations remains fully committed to continuing to fulfil its mandate pursuant to Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), as circumstances permit. I therefore welcome the 12-month extension of the UNAMI mandate by the Security Council, as requested by the Government of Iraq. While the United Nations remains responsive to the current challenges facing Iraq, it is keen to engage in a strategic dialogue on plans for the future of the country. To this end, I will convene a meeting in New York on 18 September 2006 with the representatives of Iraq and its neighbours, the permanent members of the Security Council, key donors and regional and international organizations. I hope that the participants will seize that opportunity to engage in a frank and forward-looking dialogue.

68. While the Organization's presence and ability to operate effectively remains severely constrained by the security environment, UNAMI is exploring how it can maximize its impact and which tasks can be prioritized. I would like to reiterate my

appreciation to Member States, from both within and outside the Multinational Force, who support the United Nations in Iraq, by providing military advisers, guard forces and movement and aviation support.

69. Following the formal completion of the political transition of Iraq, the time has come for its constitutionally elected Government and the international community to place the safety and welfare of the Iraqi people at the front and centre of all their collective efforts. The Iraqi people and their leaders have arrived at an important crossroads. If they are able to build firm foundations for the common interest of all Iraqis, the promise of peace and prosperity will be within reach. However, if current patterns of discord and violence prevail for much longer, there is a grave danger of a breakdown of the Iraqi State, and potentially of civil war, which would be detrimental not only to the Iraqi people, but also to countries in the region and the international community in general. I therefore hope that, at this critical time, the Iraqi people will resolve to unite with a view to building a better future for all, living up to the country's significant human and natural potential. They will need the active support from the region and the international community in general, which must recognize that overcoming the many challenges facing Iraq will require long-term solutions that can only be achieved through a sustained commitment of cooperation and support.

70. Based on the extended mandate of UNAMI, the United Nations will continue to stand by the people of Iraq and their political, religious and community leaders, and will make every effort to play its part to help generate tangible progress for a democratic and prosperous Iraq, at peace with itself, its neighbours and the international community in general. I wish to thank my Special Representative, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, for his leadership and the Mission's national and international staff, as well as the personnel of the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, for their dedication in fulfilling their duties in implementing the UNAMI mandate under extremely difficult conditions.